9/16/87 R4800-2

This Week's Forum: Page 27

EDUCATION WEEK

American Education's Newspaper of Record | Volume VII, Number 2 · September 16, 1987 | *© 1987 Editorial Projects in Education / $2.00*

Teachers Dispute Studies' Counsel On Humanities

'Fact-Based' Courses Unwise, They Contend

By Robert Rothman

Educators and curriculum specialists last week disputed the prescriptions in two new reports that call for a greater emphasis on content in history and literature instruction.

While acknowledging that students need to know more about the humanities, critics said they feared the reports could lead to a "fact-based" curriculum that would do little to improve students' acquisition and retention of knowledge.

Flap over reports. See page 15.

The reports—"American Memory," by Lynne V. Cheney, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*, by the education historian Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn Jr., assistant secretary of education for educational research and improvement—draw on results of the first national student assessment in the humanities. The assessment found huge gaps in 11th graders' knowledge of history and literature.

"All of us are appalled by the gaps," said Nancy S. McHugh, president of the National Council of Teachers of English. "But we don't think the answer is to pour facts into students' heads, Japanese-style."

" 'Trivial pursuit'-minded kids can answer all the questions [on an assessment] and still not be educated, still not have an

Continued on Page 23

Diane Ravitch

Chester E. Finn Jr.

Patricia Hobbs

Combative Bennett Charges Into Final Year

Says He Will Stress 'Accountability' of Educators for Results

By Julie A. Miller

WASHINGTON—The theme is "accountability."

With the 1988 Presidential elections drawing closer and the end of his term as Secretary of Education a little more than a year away, William J. Bennett plans, he said last week, to focus his energies on promoting, in speeches and legislative proposals, strategies to hold educators responsible for the success or failure of their students.

"We will talk a lot this year about accountability, accountability, accountability," Mr. Bennett said in an interview with *Education Week*. "We will try to get our programs at the federal level to focus on accountability and try to urge actions at the state and local level to have more accountability."

Mr. Bennett said he will propose revision of a variety of federal education programs to require states and school districts receiving grants to document the effectiveness of their programs; the successful ones would be rewarded with more money.

"Our Chapter 1 plan is the model," he said. "We want to do the same thing throughout all the other programs. Where there's success, let's build on it, let's replicate it, let's reward it. Where there's failure, let's not."

AP/Wide World Photos

Secretary Bennett speaking at the National Press Club last week.

The Education Department had proposed that states be required to assess their local Chapter 1 programs and to step in to improve those in which students did not show sufficient achievement; the plan would also

Continued on Page 16

Speech Terms N.E.A. 'Most Aggressive' Foe Of Reform in Nation

By Lynn Olson

WASHINGTON—Secretary of Education William J. Bennett stepped up his crusade against the National Education Association in a major speech here last week, challenging Presidential candidates to "stand firm" against the union and support accountability in the schools.

In sharply worded remarks on "Education Reform and the 1988 Election," given at the National Press Club and repeated two days later at a press conference in Chapel Hill, N.C., Mr. Bennett called the teachers' union the "most entrenched and aggressive opponent of education reform" in the nation.

He criticized the union for opposing, through its state affiliates, performance-based pay for teachers, alternative-certification routes, teacher-competency testing, and standardized tests for students.

"The fact is that for its recent behavior, the National Education Association deserves an award: the most mis-named organization in America," Mr. Bennett said. "I therefore propose that every candidate for

Continued on Page 18

Urban Schools Have Turned Corner But Still Need Help, Report Says

By William Snider

Urban school districts are making "steady progress" in raising student-achievement levels and meeting a vast assortment of special needs, but they "cannot do it all alone," a report to be released this week contends.

Based on a year of self-examination by 44 of the largest urban districts, "Challenges to Urban Education: Results in the Making," casts the future of inner-city public schools in terms far more optimistic than other recent assessments.

In particular, it rebuts the frequent criticism, contained most recently in a report released last week by the Committee for Economic Development, that urban districts have an "archaic school structure and unresponsive bureaucracy" that frustrates real school improvements.

The new portrait, scheduled for release at the annual meeting of the Council of Great City Schools, says urban educators are "rolling up their sleeves" and "doing a remarkable job of incorporating the realities of urban life into a rich and varied educational experience."

"The report is deliberately hopeful," said Michael D. Casserly, project director for the study, "because the districts themselves are really quite hopeful."

"We have a good handle on what works with the kids we serve," he said, "but we're not reaching nearly as many of them as we

Continued on Page 20

Family 'Well-Being' To Be New Criterion In Federal Policies

By Deborah L. Gold

WASHINGTON—President Reagan, acting on a recommendation advanced by former Undersecretary of Education Gary L. Bauer, has ordered that all federal policies be assessed for their impact on family "well being."

The President's executive order, signed Sept. 3, requires the Education Department and all other federal agencies to weigh proposals against several criteria, including their potential to strengthen or erode family stability, marital commitment, and "the authority and rights of parents in the education, nurture, and supervision of their children."

The order also compels agencies to consider what message their proposals send the public about the status of the family and what they convey to young people about "the relationship between their behavior, their personal responsibility, and the norms of our society."

The directive, which applies to existing as well as proposed policies and regulations, also asks agency officials to question whether a specific action would help or hamper the family in performing its traditional functions and whether it could be performed "by a lower level of government or by the family itself."

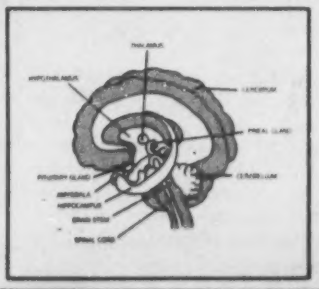
Mr. Bauer, who left the Education De-

Continued on Page 19

Also in the news

Making Teacher Reform A 'National Crusade'
Ernest L. Boyer told nine Presidential hopefuls and Secretary of Education William J. Bennett last week that a "peacetime Marshall Plan" is needed to improve teaching.
7

Using All of the Brain: A Must for the Gifted
New research on how the brain functions is showing teachers that creativity can be just as just as important as analytical skill in the schooling of gifted and talented students.
8



School-Takeover Plan Dealt a Blow in N.J.
The New Jersey Senate has narrowly voted down Gov. Thomas H. Kean's controversial legislation allowing the state to assume control of "academically bankrupt" districts.
11

IN SUMMARY

Belgians Go Home
The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has refused to grant special visas to 14 Belgian schoolteachers hired by the Kansas City (Mo.) School District to teach in elementary foreign-language magnet schools. **Page 5.**

The Need for Self-Esteem
Two new studies, repeating landmark research conducted four decades ago by the prominent psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, have found that black children feel as inferior today as they did 40 years ago. **Page 6.**

Lobbying To Join the Oppressed
A number of ethnic and religious groups are pressing the California Board of Education to include them in a controversial model curriculum on human rights and genocide now up for adoption. **Page 11.**

How Tough Are Teacher Tests?
A new study concludes that teacher-competency tests, now required or under consideration in 48 states as part of the current school-reform movement, weed out only the most incompetent teachers. **Page 13.**

Rare Session, Common Problem
Two House and Senate committees convened jointly for the first time to hear testimony on a new report that recommends sweeping actions to improve the education of disadvantaged children. **Page 14.**

The Secretary Slams the Door
A television advertisement featuring Secretary of Education William J. Bennett—part of a new $225,000 campaign against drugs in the schools—has drawn criticism from education associations for its depiction of schools. **Page 14.**

Appointments	28
Commentary	32
Deadlines	28
Events	28
Grants	28
Letters	25 and 26
Marketplace	29
New in Print	24
Private Schools	9
State Capitals	11

FORUM
"Changing High School Academic Standards," Education Commission of the States.
Statement on Page 27

EDUCATION WEEK (ISSN 0277-4232) is published 40 times per year (weekly except for the first week in January, the last week in June, the month of July, the first four weeks in August, and the last two weeks in December) by Editorial Projects in Education, Incorporated. Editorial and advertising sales offices are located at 1255 23rd Street, N.W., Suite 775, Washington, D.C. 20037. (202) 466-5190. Subscriptions: U.S.: $47.94 for 40 issues. Canada: $70.94 for 40 issues. Foreign: $112.94(airmail) and $80.94 (surface mail) for 40 issues. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to EDUCATION WEEK, P.O. Box 6987, Syracuse, N.Y. 13217. Volume VII, Issue 2.

ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

Foundation Awards $1 Million To Challenger Education Center

Officials of the Gannett Foundation have announced the award of a $1-million grant to the Challenger Center for Space-Science Education.

The grant will double the budget for the center, which was established last year by the surviving families of the seven astronauts killed aboard the space shuttle Challenger.

The grant—of which half was awarded immediately and half is to be matched by contributions from other donors—will enable the center to develop curricular materials and to begin planning the construction of facilities.

The center's "flagship" facility will be at an as yet undetermined site in Washington; a "satellite" facility is planned for Houston.

The president of the center is to be David L. Winstead, former executive director of the Washington/Baltimore Regional Association, a nonprofit alliance of businesses. Previously, Mr. Winstead had served as a special assistant to former Senator Charles McC. Mathias of Maryland.

Center officials say they hope to raise $30 million over the next five years for the program, which is aimed at promoting education in the space sciences through interactive learning, including simulated space flight.

■ **School districts will have until Dec. 1** to decide whether to remain in a voluntary nationwide class action for the resolution of millions of dollars in compensatory- and punitive-damage claims against asbestos manufacturers.

Lawyers involved in the case said last week that all districts would soon receive a letter that outlines their options.

STATES

Florida Schools, Businesses Form Anti-Dropout Compact

Florida's school superintendent has forged a new "compact" between the state's business and education communities designed to keep thousands of youngsters in school.

Creation of the Florida Compact was announced by Betty Castor, state superintendent of education. It is modeled after existing programs in Boston and Broward County, Fla. The Broward program has provided 1,100 jobs to students through 140 Florida businesses.

Under such agreements, local corporations agree to guarantee jobs for those students considered at risk of dropping out who stay in school through graduation. Frequently, the plans also include part-time employment for students while they are in school.

Ms. Castor predicted that by 1990 more than 5,000 Florida students will be affected by the program. The legislature has appropriated $500,000 this year to launch the effort.

Virginia High Court's Opinion May Jeopordize Asbestos Suits

An advisory ruling by the Virginia Supreme Court may make it more difficult for the state's school districts to sue manufacturers for recovery of asbestos-removal costs.

The court backed arguments by four asbestos manufacturers that a 1986 state law unconstitutionally extended to July 1, 1990, the period during which districts could file such claims. The justices said that under the statute of limitations in effect at the time the companies' products were installed, districts were required to act within five years of installation.

The court issued its opinion this month in response to a request by U.S. District Judge Walter E. Hoffman of Norfolk. The judge is hearing a case in which the Norfolk school board and the city are seeking $20 million in actual and punitive damages from the four companies. The plaintiffs will ask the court to find their case valid under the pre-1986 statute of limitations, according to Bernard A. Pishko, a lawyer for the city.

Empowerment for Teachers Seen Vital by Minnesota Panel

Teachers in Minnesota must be allowed greater influence over the way schools are run if public education in the state is to be improved and teaching professionalized, according to a research and education group in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

In a 57-page report, the Citizens League calls for the creation of "cooperatively managed schools, where operational-decision-making authority would be shared by teachers and administrators." It also proposes a number of recommendations for strengthening teacher education and licensure in the state.

In preparing the document, the group's 38-member committee on teaching conferred with more than 25 state educators and education officials and a number of national experts, including Marc S. Tucker, executive director of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, and Joe Nathan, an education consultant to the National Governors' Association.

■ **The Illinois Supreme Court** has ordered the release of an estimated $153 million in disputed taxes on out-of-state telephone calls, permitting Gov. James R. Thompson to release most of those funds to the state's 988 school districts.

In an Aug. 28 order, the high court said that the state could spend the revenues while a suit by G.T.E.-Sprint challenging the tax is being litigated.

The court's action allowed the state to advance about $47 million to the Chicago public schools and $100 million to other districts.

The funds helped bring the Chicago school board into compliance with a law requiring that the district have a balanced budget.

Singing Their New School's Praises

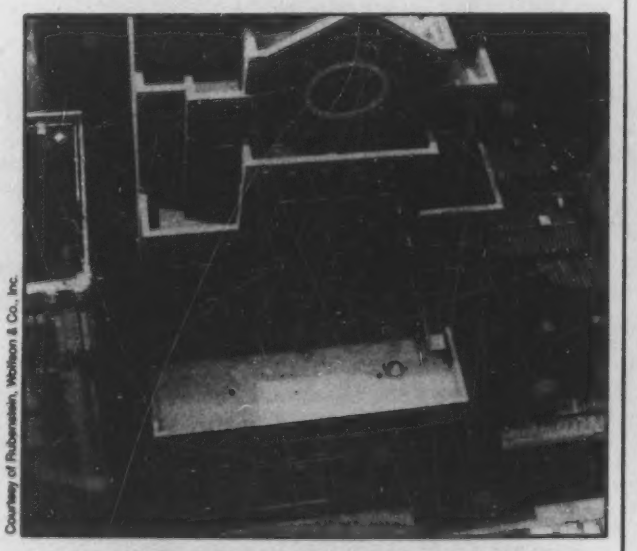
The nation's only church-choir boarding school has a unique new home at 202 West 58th Steet in New York City.

Officials of the 68-year-old St. Thomas Choir School, attempting to fight Manhattan's soaring real-estate costs, commissioned the New York City firm of Buttrick, White & Burtis to construct suitable living, study and recreation quarters on a tiny 7,500- square-foot site.

The $18-million result, strategically situated between Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, is a 15-story "campus in a skyscraper." Besides study and living areas, the high-rise, which houses 50 8-to-12 year-old boys plus school staff, features an oak-paneled dining room, a "sky chapel," and an underground rehearsal hall that doubles as a gymnasium.

A staircase from the gymnasium, dining hall, and classrooms to the dormitory serves as the "campus quadrangle," and the practice field for outdoor sports is Central Park. Faculty and staff apartments are on the upper floors.

The designers used elements of traditional church architecture to reflect the Anglican origins of the school, which offers intensive choral study in addition to academics and athletics. A voice audition is required of aspirants for admission to the exclusive student body, whose singers have performed internationally as well across the United States.



Courtesy of Rubenstein, Wohlson & Co., Inc.

Aerial view of the St. Thomas Choir School's new 15-story building, located in the cultural heart of New York City.

■ **To help the public gauge** how well schools in their communities are doing, Thomas Gilhool, secretary of education for Pennsylvania, has for the first time released school-by-school results of state reading and mathematics tests.

The reports placed by Mr. Gilhool in public libraries throughout the state suggest that schools performing well or making strong gains in student achievement between 1984 and 1987 had several factors in common. All had strengthened their reading and math programs, put into practice research on what makes schools effective, and enlisted parental support. Some schools with high levels of poverty had made substantial gains, the reports said, while a number of schools traditionally known for high achievement had room for improvement.

■ **The board of directors** of the New Jersey School Boards Association has voted unanimously to restore full power to its executive director, Octavius Reid Jr. Mr. Reid had been relieved of some of his duties in July pending an investigation into investment practices of an insurance plan he administered for the association.

The board voted Sept. 2 to reinstate Mr. Reid after hearing a preliminary report on the probe into stock-options investments that resulted in the loss of $871,000. A full report on the investigation by former U.S. Attorney Thomas Greelish was to be presented to the board late Friday.

Most Frequently Challenged Books, 1982-1987

Book	Times Challenged	Years
The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier	9	1984, 1985 (4), 1986 (2),1987 (2)
The Catcher in the Rye, J. D. Salinger	8	1983 (2), 1985 (4), 1986, 1987
Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck	8	1983 (2), 1984 (2), 1985 (3), 1986
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain	7	1983, 1984 (3), 1985, 1986, 1987
Deenie, Judy Blume	7	1985 (5), 1986 (2)
Go Ask Alice, anonymous	7	1984 (4), 1986, 1987 (2)
A Light in the Attic, Shel Silverstein	7	1985, 1986 (2), 1987 (4)
Forever, Judy Blume	6	1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 (3)
Blubber, Judy Blume	5	1985 (5), 1987
Cujo, Stephen King	5	1984, 1985, 1986 (2), 1987
The Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank	5	1983 (2), 1985 (2), 1987
Finding My Way, health textbook	5	1985, 1986 (2), 1987 (2)
Then Again Maybe I Won't, Judy Blume	5	1984, 1985 (3), 1987
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee	5	1984, 1985 (2), 1986 (2)

SOURCE: People for the American Way

DISTRICTS

School's Pupils To Stay Together In Asbestos-Cleanup Relocation

Under the terms of a court settlement reached with the aid of a nationally known desegregation researcher, the San Francisco Unified School District will open a currently unused facility to house the entire student body of a magnet middle school affected by the district's asbestos-cleanup program.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had filed a suit against the state department of education and the district in late August to prevent the dispersal to several other schools of students from the James Lick Middle School, which was one of 18 schools targeted for increased funding and special academic programs in a 1985 desegregation agreement. The district needed the Lick facility to house 2,000 students from a nearby high school that is to undergo a year-long asbestos-removal effort.

Gary Orfield, director of the University of Chicago's National School Desegregation Project and a court-appointed consultant in the desegregation case, was called in to help work out the agreement keeping the middle schoolers together.

Government Files Sex-Bias Suit Against an Indiana District

The U.S. Justice Department has filed suit in federal district court charging a Madison County, Ind., school district with discrimination against female employees in violation of federal civil-rights laws.

The suit, filed on Sept. 2, alleges that from 1973 to 1986 the West Central Community School Corporation discriminated against women by using separate job classifications for male and female maintenance workers—"custodian" for men and "matron" for women—and paying women less than men for the same work.

By establishing and maintaining the classification system, the suit argues, the district deprived women of employment opportunities and adversely affected their status as employees in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Michael A. Blickman, a lawyer for the district, said the school system "has not violated" federal law. Men and women "were not doing substantially similar work," he said. "Therefore, the differential in wages was legitimate."

Yonkers, N.Y., District Plans Lawsuit Against State

School officials in Yonkers, N.Y., say they plan to file a lawsuit this month against the state to recover some of the costs they have incurred in implementing a court-ordered desegregation plan.

The district has thus far spent $25 million on the plan, including the cost of busing students and establishing magnet schools, according to a spokesman. District officials think the state should share the costs, as well as provide technical expertise and unspecified regulatory action, because the state was "equally reponsible" for segregation in the district, the spokesman said.

The desegregation remedy, which was ordered last year by U.S. District Judge Leonard B. Sand, is considered a landmark because it was the first to link mandatory housing integration to a school-desegregation case.

Both city and school officials have appealed the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and a ruling is expected sometime this year.

St. Louis Ordered To Close 16 Schools, Renovate the Rest

The St. Louis Public Schools have been ordered by a federal judge to close 16 predominantly black schools and to spend nearly $115 million to renovate most of the 111 schools that will remain open.

U.S. District Judge Stephen Limbaugh wrote in his order this month that the schools to be closed are either too small or too old to be prudently rebuilt. The closings, which the judge said should occur over the next two to three years, could affect 3,500 students, a district spokesman said.

In issuing his most recent in a series of orders concerning the district's desegregation plans, Judge Limbaugh rejected capital-improvement plans proposed by the state, the district, and a court-appointed advisory committee. As with other parts of the comprehensive plan, the district and the state are to share the costs of the renovations, although the judge did not order a bond-issue election as recommended in a ruling last year by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

■ **The Taylor Academy**, an alternative public school for underachieving 9th and 10th graders in a Cleveland suburb, opened as scheduled last week despite protests by the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The N.A.A.C.P. had asked Ohio's state school chief to block the academy from opening on Sept. 9, charging that its predominantly black enrollment would promote racial segregation in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights district. About 75 percent of the new school's 200 students are black, compared with a districtwide black enrollment of 55 percent.

Officials of the civil-rights group had said they would consider court action, boycotts, and picketing if the state denied their request to close the school.

■ **A "no-pass, no-park" policy** has been adopted by the Loganville (Ga.) High School in an effort to steer students to higher grades. Students will be required to pass five of six courses each quarter to earn parking privileges on campus.

■ **Crime in New York City schools** has declined for the sixth consecutive year, according to school officials. Reported incidents of violence and other rules infractions fell to 9,743 in the 1986-87 school year, a 17 percent decrease over the previous year and a .38 percent drop since 1980-81. Schools in Brooklyn reported the most crime.

■ **A new child-abuse reporting center** will reduce the trauma of children who say they've been abused and will better coordinate the responses of health, legal, and social service professionals, say Hennepin County, Minn. officials who proposed the center.

The new facility, which is expected to open early next year, would streamline the interview process for most abused children by drawing together specialists from different areas to simultaneously conduct or watch the interviews. In its first year, the center hopes to help at least 300 children.

Correction

Due to typesetting errors, a Sept. 9 advertisement in *Education Week* on Bard College's fall 1987 workshops and conferences contained incorrect information. A corrected Bard advertisement appears on page 21.

PEOPLE

Calvin M. Frazier, in his last speech as Colorado's commissioner of education, lobbed a few barbs on the subject of leadership at the state's educational hierarchy.

District superintendents have too many responsibilities, school principals often "don't inspire and don't lead," and school-board members are not prepared well enough for their jobs, Mr. Frazier told the Colorado Association of School Executives. He retired Aug. 31 after 14 years as commissioner.

■

Janice Herbranson, reputed to be the lowest-paid teacher in the United States before her one-room school in North Dakota closed last year, has a new job this fall teaching Mexican immigrant children in a Texas border town.

The 53-year-old teacher, whose $6,800 a year salary earned her appearances on national television and a letter from President Reagan, lost her job in the spring of 1986 when the McLeod, N.D., school closed because of low enrollment—one student. She has more than tripled her salary, to $25,000, by taking the pre-kindergarten teaching position in Progreso, Tex.

■

Two classes of inner-city schoolchildren—one in Atlanta and one in Chicago—have gotten promises of college scholarships for graduating from high school, through programs inspired by the New York City businessman **Eugene Lang.**

A group known as **100 Black Men of Atlanta,** which includes Superintendent of Schools **Alonzo Crim** and former Mayor **Maynard Jackson,** has announced that it will sponsor an 8th-grade class at Archer High School, paying all college expenses for any of the 28 students who enroll in postsecondary institutions after graduation.

In Chicago, **Harrison I. Steans,** a banker and philanthropist, has promised 37 6th-grade students from the Schneider School at least $1,200 a year for four years of college, if they finish high school.

RESEARCH AND REPORTS

Restore Citizenship Education To Curriculum, A.A.S.A. Urges

The "back to basics" movement and declining interest in "public spirited" activities throughout society have helped push citizenship education out of the school curriculum, a new report asserts.

Schools should reverse that trend by providing programs "that will help students better understand both their rights and responsibilities as citizens," according to *Citizenship: Goal of Education*, released last week by the American Association of School Administrators.

Administrators responding to an A.A.S.A. survey cited lack of time and competition from other curricular mandates as the chief obstacles to preparing students for their role as citizens.

The report, written by Diana Reische, recommends, citing examples of successful programs, that citizenship education enable students to see themselves as members of "widening circles," beginning with the family and continuing through the school, community, county, state, nation, and world.

Copies of the report can be obtained for $7.95 each, plus $3.50 for postage and handling, from A.A.S.A. Publications, 1801 North Moore St., Arlington, Va. 22209.

FORUM

Changing High School Academic Standards

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

High school graduation requirements are on the up escalator. Students enrolling in ninth grade this fall will be in for a more rigorous academic ride than their older brothers and sisters graduating just a few years back.

Since 1980, at least 45 states and the District of Columbia have altered high school graduation requirements. Generally, mathematics and science courses have led the increase, but more than 40 states also have increased the total number of units required for graduation. Quite often the increase in academic courses has been achieved by decreasing the number of elective-course credits students are permitted to earn, or by just increasing the total.

In 1980, 17 units of credit, on the average, were required for graduation. In 1987, this had moved to an average of 19.7 units of credit. Florida was the first state to raise the total to 24 units of credit (1983) for all students, followed by Missouri for its college-bound students in 1985.

Dual Diploma

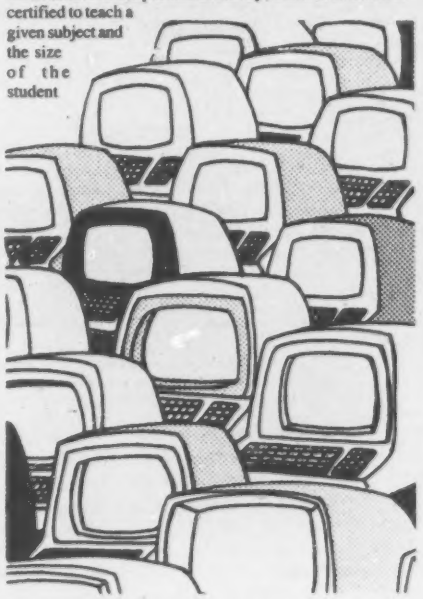
One of the more significant changes between 1980 and 1987 was the increase in number of states that provided for a dual-track diploma, that is, a college-bound or vocational/technical diploma in addition to the standard diploma. In 1980, only the District of Columbia and New York had this requirement, but in 1987 this had increased to 15 states. California is moving toward an advanced diploma with a "suggested model" for college-bound students; the District of Columbia uses a "comprehensive" and a "career/vocational" diploma.

In Florida, the top diploma is labeled "academic scholars"; Georgia, "advanced"; Indiana, "academic honors"; Kentucky, "commonwealth diploma"; Michigan, "college preparatory"; Missouri, "college preparatory studies certificate"; New York, "regents diploma"; North Carolina, "scholars program"; Oklahoma, "college preparatory"; South Carolina, "academic achievement honors"; Texas, "advanced high school honors program"; and Virginia, "advanced studies."

In three states, a three-level diploma has been established: Louisiana, "standard," "scholars program" and "regents scholar"; Rhode Island, "basic," "career bound," "college bound"; and Tennessee, "standard," "honors-general" and "honors-vocational education." Typically, the college or academic diplomas require additional courses in math, science, language arts and social studies and often require or encourage foreign language courses.

Vocational Education

Increasing the academic requirements for all students has the potential of closing program opportunities for some students. Some high schools, for example, could find that elective courses in home economics, shop, music or the arts are suffering from lower enrollments. There is even the potential of some elective areas being dropped when the available hours/periods in the day, number of teachers certified to teach a given subject and the size of the student body all intersect, causing schedule gridlock. Students are also a part of the gridlock when state demands restrict their ability to take elective courses or when two required courses can only be offered the same hour.



This potential is even more likely in vocational programs where federal and state funding demand a rigid sequence of course offerings and longer blocks of time for laboratory classes. Currently, the ECS Information Clearinghouse has noted 14 states where vocational-type classes have been given some special consideration. In Arkansas and Idaho, one unit of the social studies/humanities requirement can be a practical arts course. Vermont permits the five units of math and science to be some combination of the two areas, giving more latitude to vocational students. In Utah and some other states, the elective requirements mention practical arts or vocational education.

Computer Literacy

The impact of technology has created a call for computers or computer literacy in 10 states. Frequently included is a separate one-semester course requirement or an elective option permitting students to choose among a range of offerings. Alabama asks that students become computer literate through related coursework before graduation. Many of these requirements were added several years ago when the home computer industry was expanding rapidly. At that time, there was little evidence that states backed the requirement with funds to purchase computers or even inventoried school districts to determine if each student had access to a computer.

Increased State Control

Less visible in the graduation requirements story are a myriad of rules and laws that also have an impact on the high school curriculum, the teachers and students. Passing a minimum competency test in the basic-skill areas prior to graduation is now mandated in 21 states. Early exit from high school by means of a test is possible only in California and then just with parent permission.

Taking a reduced load in the senior year seems to be the target in Wisconsin where all students in grades 7–12 must participate in a class or board-approved activity each period of the day. In at least three states, the science requirement has been clarified to specify that a portion of the classes must be in a laboratory science. Further specificity has been added in some states requiring a minimum grade-point average or advanced-placement and college-entry tests in order to earn the academic-track diploma.

On the other end of the academic spectrum, the nine states that are implementing "No Pass, No Play" rules for extracurriculum participation also are having an impact on the academic-course structure by forcing students to take academic work seriously. In general, it appears that all states are adding more specificity to high school curricular mandates.

What is the bottom line? Enrollment in the academic subjects will increase; enrollment in other areas such as vocational education, art, music, physical education may go down. But will this really cause improvement or are the critics right when they say that the dropout rate will increase, higher-order thinking skills will be ignored and vocational education and bilingual needs will remain unmet? This may be the school year when answers to some of these questions will start to appear.

At the ECS Information Clearinghouse, we are watching the Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) project with interest. A report titled, *The Impact of S.B. 813 on California Secondary Schools*, due to be released in October, promises some in-depth data on students and teachers from 17 schools. Preliminary results show that the top down mandates and teacher paticipation in implementation are changing how schools operate.

Is this type of data available from other states? Several other PACE-type centers have been started and others are in the planning stages. Definitive data on the reform movement is likely to become available from these efforts this year. The ECS Information Clearinghouse is interested in collecting such data from school districts, universities and state departments of education. Please let us know if you have information that will help us track the reform efforts in your state.

Chris Pipho
Director
ECS Information Clearinghouse

CHANGES IN HIGH SCHOOL SUBJECT-AREA REQUIREMENTS, 1980–87

- **Math requirements were increased in 42 states.**
  In 1987: 11 states require 3 years
  2 states require 2 or 3 years
  31 states require 2 years
  2 states require 1 year
  5 states have no requirement
  1 state recommends 2 years
  1 state recommends 3 years

- **Science requirements were increased in 36 states.**
  In 1987: 3 states require 3 years
  2 states require 2 or 3 years
  36 states require 2 years
  5 states require 1 year
  5 states have no requirement
  2 states recommend 2 years

- **Language arts/English requirements were increased in 18 states.**
  In 1987: 39 states require 4 years
  7 states require 3 years
  5 states have no requirement
  2 states recommend 4 years

- **Social studies requirements were increased in 29 states.**
  In 1987: 1 state requires 4 years
  2 states require 3.5 years
  24 states require 3 years
  3 states require 2.5 years
  14 states require 2 years
  1 state requires 2 or 1.5 years
  2 states require 1.5 years
  1 state requires 1 year
  1 state requires 0.5 years

- **Physical education/health requirements were increased in 7 states.**
  In 1987: 1 state requires 4.5 years
  1 state requires 4 years
  1 state requires 2.5 years
  9 states require 2 years
  9 states require 1.5 years
  1 state requires 1.25 years
  18 states require 1 year
  9 states have no requirement
  1 state requires 0.5 years of health only
  1 state requires 1 year of physical education only

- **Foreign language requirements/electives were added in 5 states.**
  In 1987: 1 state requires 1 year
  4 states emphasize as an optional elective 1 year

- **Computer science requirements/electives were added in 7 states.**
  In 1987: 4 states require 0.5 years
  2 states emphasize as an optional elective 1 year
  1 state emphasizes as an optional elective 2 years

SOURCE: ECS Clearinghouse Notes, numbers 16, 17 and 28.

Education Commission of the States • 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300 • Denver, Colorado 80295

The content of FORUM materials is prepared by the participating organizations.
EDUCATION WEEK does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the statements and/or any views or opinions expressed therein.